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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000026

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [IZ](#) [EZ](#) [MEPP](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH MEP ON REPAIRING US-EUROPE RELATIONS

Classified By: Political Officer Kimberly C. Krhounek for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary. Longtime embassy contact and Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Jana Hybaskova termed herself shocked by the depth of anti-American feeling she has found at European institutions such as the Council and Commission, including knee-jerk reactions opposing any U.S. involvement in areas of EU concern. She urged that the USG make relations with Europe a priority, "invite" European countries to participate more fully in Iraq and the MEPP, and make greater use of NATO as a unifying force to achieve common objectives. End summary.

2. (SBU) On January 4, we met with Czech MEP Jana Hybaskova during a visit home from Brussels. A fluent Arabic and English speaker, Ms. Hybaskova had a 15 year career with the Czech MFA where she served as head of the Middle East Department and as Czech Ambassador to both Slovenia and Kuwait. While in Kuwait, she proved to be an instrumental ally in getting coalition allies involved on the ground in Iraq. Thanks in large part to her energy and effort, the Czechs had up to 16 experts working for the CPA, deployed an NBC unit and field hospital to Iraq, and launched humanitarian assistance programs which now include training diplomats, police and Iraqi judges. Since being elected as one of the Czech Republic's first MEPs in June 2004, Ms. Hybaskova has joined the Group of European People's Party-European Democrats and chairs the Delegation for relations with Israel, among other committee assignments. Ms. Hybaskova has very strong views on the importance of the transatlantic relationship, and has been one of our biggest supporters on Middle East issues including Iraq and the MEPP.

3. (C) Hybaskova said one of the biggest shocks she received in Brussels was seeing the depth of anti-American sentiment within EU institutions. While the European Parliament members are less virulent because they have such diverse constituency needs, she found the European Commission and Council to be "really, really anti-American." As one example, she cited the Commission's plan to cut a program from 20 million euros to 4 million euros, until someone made the argument that if that particular program was cut, the Americans would "come in and fill the gap." Immediately, the 20 million euro allotment was restored. She said that such a simple, knee jerk reaction is very common and is routinely used by MEPs to keep their pet projects funded.

4. (C) Hybaskova was very pleased that President Bush would soon be traveling to Europe and hoped the visit would be seen as a signal to Europeans that the USG values the transatlantic relationship. She urged that the USG "invite, and I mean really invite" European countries to be more involved in planning and developments in Iraq and also in Israel and the Palestinian territories, as these were still the most sensitive issues in our relations. She said that many Europeans are convinced that the USG only wants their money to fund projects, but that they are not welcome at the table to plan how best to implement important steps forward. She further urged that the USG use NATO as a primary unifying organization. The NATO training mission in Iraq is a good example, as there is already a high degree of unity and consensus at NATO, so bringing it into areas where it has competence will make Europeans feel more involved.

5. (C) Comment. Ms Hybaskova was clearly dismayed by the extent to which the dispute over Iraq had colored our relationship with the most important EU institutions. Like many Central Europeans, she holds NATO in very high esteem, and believes that the USG will be able to achieve greater European involvement in Iraq and other areas by essentially "going around the EU" and operating through NATO's consensus mechanisms. This is one way to avoid the politically charged atmosphere in Brussels. As a long-time Arabist, Ms. Hybaskova will continue to play an important role in Middle East issues (she is currently planning to participate in EP election observer missions to the Palestinian Authority and Iraq), only now on the broader EU stage. Given her youth (age 39) and energy, she can be one of those who will most strongly influence these issues within the EU during the coming years. End comment.

6. BAGHDAD MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

HILLAS